

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend Claims 1, 6, 7, 12, 13, 18, 19, and 24 as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A speech signal processing apparatus comprising:  
distortion obtaining means for obtaining a respective modification distortion ~~between synthesis units before and after modification~~ for each of a plurality of synthesis units,  
each respective modification distortion being a distortion between a respective unmodified  
individual synthesis unit and the individual synthesis unit after modification;

selection means for selecting synthesis units based on the modification  
distortion obtained by said distortion obtaining means; and

speech synthesis means for performing speech synthesis based on the synthesis  
units selected by said selection means.

2-5. (Cancelled)

6. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said  
distortion obtaining means uses a value obtained by adding the obtained modification distortion  
~~between the synthesis units before and after modification~~ and a concatenation distortion  
generated by concatenating a synthesis unit to another synthesis unit.

7. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said  
distortion obtaining means calculates a weighted sum of the obtained modification distortion

~~between the synthesis units before and after modification~~ and a concatenation distortion generated by concatenating a synthesis unit to another synthesis unit.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said distortion obtaining means calculates the modification distortion using a cepstrum distance.

10. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said distortion obtaining means includes a table storing distortions, and determines the modification distortion by referring to the table.

11. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said distortion obtaining means includes a table storing concatenation distortions, and determines a concatenation distortion by referring to the table.

12. (Currently Amended) An apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising:

input means for inputting text data;

language analysis means for performing language analysis of the text data; and

prosody-parameter generation means for generating predetermined prosody parameters based on a result of analysis of said language analysis means,

wherein said distortion obtaining means obtains the modification distortion ~~between the synthesis units before and after modification~~ based on the predetermined prosody parameters generated by said prosody-parameter generation means.

13. (Currently Amended) A speech signal processing method comprising:  
a distortion obtaining step of obtaining a respective modification distortion ~~between synthesis units before and after modification for each of a plurality of synthesis units,~~  
each respective modification distortion being a distortion between a respective unmodified individual synthesis unit and the individual synthesis unit after modification;  
a selection step of selecting synthesis units based on the modification distortion obtained in said distortion obtaining step; and  
a speech synthesis step of performing speech synthesis based on the synthesis units selected in said selection step.

14-17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 13, wherein in said distortion obtaining step, a value is obtained by adding the obtained modification distortion ~~between the synthesis units before and after modification~~ and a concatenation distortion generated by concatenating a synthesis unit to another synthesis unit.

19. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 13, wherein in said distortion obtaining step, a weighted sum is calculated of the obtained modification distortion ~~between the synthesis units before and after modification~~ and a concatenation distortion generated by concatenating a synthesis unit to another synthesis unit.

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 13, wherein in said distortion obtaining step, the modification distortion is calculated using a cepstrum distance.

22. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 13, wherein in said distortion obtaining step, a table storing distortions is provided, and the modification distortion is determined by referring to the table.

23. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 13, wherein in said distortion obtaining step, a table storing concatenation distortions is provided, and a concatenation distortion is determined by referring to the table.

24. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 13, further comprising:

an input step of inputting text data;

a language analysis step of performing language analysis of the text data; and

a prosody-parameter generation step of generating predetermined prosody parameters based on a result of analysis in said language analysis step,

wherein in said distortion obtaining step, a the modification distortion is obtained ~~between the synthesis units before and after modification~~ based on the predetermined prosody parameters generated in said prosody-parameter generation step.

25. (Previously Presented) A storage medium, capable of being read by a computer, storing a program for executing a method according to any one of Claims 13, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, and 24.